



Veteran VOICES

"Serving Those Who Served"

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Vol. 1 Issue 4

July 2000

WWII Foundation Hosts Memorial Day Event

Shelton High Grad Wins Scholarship

By Colleen Gilbert, staff writer

May 28 dawned cloudy with predictions of rain throughout the day. However, by 2 pm, when a crowd of over 500 gathered at the World War II Memorial on the Capitol Campus in Olympia, the day had turned fair and balmy. The fast moving clouds provided a perfect backdrop for the Olympia High School Band, all dressed in red and black, to play for the ceremony that marked the one-year anniversary of the dedication of the memorial.

The Washington State World War II Memorial Education Foundation hosted the event, giving all those in attendance an opportunity to watch history in the making as they presented the first Foundation scholarship to William R. Harris, a graduating senior from Shelton High School. As co-chairs of the scholarship committee, Virginia Merifield and Nancy Motomatsu looked on as Will presented a portion of the composition that was used to judge the finalists for the scholarship competition. Both of Will's grandfathers had served during World War II and Will was able to draw on their life stories to successfully



Photos by M. Young

Co-chairs of the scholarship committee, Virginia Merifield (right) and Nancy Motomatsu presented William R. Harris, from Shelton High School a \$1,000 scholarship.

become the first recipient of this scholarship.

John King, director of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, delivered the keynote address, calling out the names of 17 Washington residents who died in action during World War II while in the US Armed Forces. These were names of individuals not on the initial listing, and bring the total of Washington KIA during WWII to 5,840. Mr. King also urged all residents to remember to pause at 3 pm on Memorial Day to pay tribute to those who gave their lives for our country, as part of the National Moment of Remembrance. ★



A crowd of over 500 gathered at the World War II Memorial for the Memorial Day event.

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Veteran Voices

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By John King, WDVA director

On May 26 the Governor's Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee and the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs hosted a recognition ceremony honoring veterans advocates for exceptional performance and dedication to the principles of "*Serving Those Who Served*."

Joe Dear, Governor Locke's Chief of Staff attended and addressed the audience on behalf of the Governor. His message was one of heartfelt gratitude and well received by everyone.

We live in the most privileged society of mankind and our hearts should be filled with a sense of accomplishments. Our veterans community has caused this nation to preserve and protect this nation that we enjoy today.

With that in mind, we need to celebrate



Governor's Chief of Staff Joe Dear relayed a message on behalf of Governor Locke to the audience attending the recognition event.

Commemorating exceptional leaders

more often and give appreciation more freely to one another. That's why this event was held. We recognized those who served in the last Millennium, for their efforts contributing immeasurably for the betterment of all veterans in Washington State. This ceremony was the beginning of remembering to celebrate the life's work being done on behalf of our veterans.

John Lee was Master of Ceremonies as Certificates of Merit were given to our veteran leaders and supporters of veterans from around the state who have been instrumental in the past in paving the way for future veterans.

We also had a little fun at this event, by playing a trivia game. Senator Shirley Winsley (D-Dist #28) was the final winner. She was extremely happy about winning a singing Billy Bass.

Colleen Gilbert, Miriam Young, and Glenda Vick were significant in making this event a success and I appreciate all their efforts.

John King



The Governor's Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee and the WA State Department of Veterans Affairs hosted a recognition ceremony honoring veterans advocates from around the state. The first in a series of recognition programs to come. (photo by Rick Patterson, WA Military Dept.)

WDVA honors remarkable employees

By Miriam Young, staff writer

WDVA recently held three employee recognition events covering each sub-division within the agency. "These recognition events provide us with the opportunity to take time out from the everyday workload to celebrate our agency's many accomplishments and to give special recognition to individuals for their tremendous achievements during the past year," said agency director John King.



Dr. Blesilda Mamerto receives the Director's Award from Jerry Towne at the staff appreciation ceremony.



Members of the Food Service dept. were awarded the Distinguished Service Award at the Orting recognition ceremony. (All photos by Colleen Gilbert)

expected. The quality care given to the residents is her highest priority. She recognizes the concerns of family members, as well as the resident's needs and concerns.

Dr. Mamerto has been very successful in developing several cost-saving programs beneficial to both residents and to the home. In addition, she has a

sincere and compassionate approach while working with the terminally ill, ensuring their remaining time be as comfortable as possible. She was instrumental in developing the Chronic Pain Management Protocol, also.

According to one resident, "That little Doctor is very good, and she always has a smile for me."

The Food Service department

also received the Director's Award because of their consistent production of exceptional meals that are both nutritional and visually appealing. This team takes ownership and pride in the quality of food they serve and the quality of the environment. They always go the extra



The proud parents of Sandi McNeeley congratulate her for receiving the Distinguished Service Award and on her retirement from state service.

Orting Ceremony

Employees at the Soldiers Home held their program on May 19. Residents and staff were excited to hear that Dr. Blesilda Mamerto was chosen to receive the Director's Award. Dr. Mamerto is highly respected for being such a caring and compassionate person. Over the past 15 years she has worked at the Soldiers Home, she often goes beyond what is



Recognized for their distinguished service at the Orting ceremony were Jack Boone, Electrician (right) and Margaret Conley, Nurse Practitioner.



Honored Employees Continued



John Lee presented Liz Berens, HR at the Retsil facility, the Director's Award on behalf of John King.



Carlos Saenz, Pharmacist (left), Diane Benjamin, Psy. Social Worker (below), and Margaret McDaniel, RN (below left) were given the Distinguished Service Award at the Retsil program.

Photos by M. Young



(left to right) Colleen Thornton, John Jackson, Melissa Wilt, Christine Scott, and Trish Bergman, the Health Information Systems team were given the Distinguished Service Award for their outstanding work on the medical records.



Ron Ives and Georgia Darrell, two of the eight custodians working in Bldg 9 at Retsil, available to receive the Distinguished Service Award. Supervisor Jim Brown proudly stands behind. Not present were Teryl Harris, Steve Ross, Richard Blees, Jaime Ang, Debbie Kaes, and Anne Brillhart.

mile in preparing special diets for individual resident needs. They continually do an outstanding job.

Receiving the Distinguished Service Award were Jack Boone, Electrician; Margaret Conley, Nurse Practitioner; and Sandi McNeeley, Admin. Assistant.

Boone was sited for his outstanding knowledge in the electrical field that has contributed to several cost-savings on capital projects. His ability to handle

resident and staff requests in a timely and courteous manner has greatly contributed to the productivity of the work unit. Conley is a seasoned nurse practitioner, her clinical skills and knowledge, compassionate bedside manner, and professional standards

of practice ensure the highest quality of medical care for residents. She is a consummate teamplayer and negotiator, able to identify problems, implement successful resolutions, while improving the process. Her selfless dedication and attitude are unsurpassed. McNeeley has been a team player at the home for almost 30 years, adapting to whatever changes and opportunities are presented. Her work ethic and performance standards are truly exceptional. She diligently works to meet deadlines and often exceeds requirements. She always has time to patiently listen to a gleeful resident who won at bingo, or distraught resident who wants to leave the home, or staff who call in ill or have family emergencies. With her positive attitude, caring compassionate manner, dedication and contagious humor, she is a model employee.

Retsil Ceremony

Award recipients at Retsil were recognized on May 23. Liz Berens received the Director's Award for her efforts in

coordinating the Washington Veterans Home stone sign restoration project and for her participation as co-chair of the Wellness Committee and all the special events that they have coordinated for the benefit of all staff members. Most recently was the community Health Fair that took place May 17.

Carlos Saenz, Diane Benjamin, and Margaret McDaniel were given the Distinguished Service Award. McDaniel for her exceptional work done on the Minimum Data Sets, which is a vital part of the residents medical records information and must be completed in a precise manner.



Benjamin was acknowledged for her recent coverage of the many social services needs on campus following the resignations of two Social Work staffers. Saenz was actively involved on an elite committee that worked out an agreement with the Federal VA to supply medications to the homes through the Federal Supply Schedule pricing by buying on the VA AmeriSource contract, estimated to save thousands of

dollars per year.

He then initiated and completed a drug formulary for the WVH. This, too, resulted in saving medication costs for the residents. All in all Saenz is a tremendous



The Veterans Estate Management Program team was honored with the Director's Award. Pictured are Ben Pineda, John Lee, Jim Green, John King, George Barnes, and Charlie Yoon. Members not present are Jo Peterson, Dick Venesky, and Lynn Rodriguez. (photos by M. Young)



Alex Deluao (left), Tom Schumacher (center), and Ric Price (right) all received the Distinguished Service Award.

asset to the pharmacy operations.

Two team awards were presented. One to the custodial crew in Building 9 for their significant improvements in



Jerry Towne graciously accepted the Director's Award at the recognition ceremony.

keeping the building exceptionally clean, the other went to the Health

Information Systems (medical records) team for the support with the resident information system (ADL) encompassing significant changes in making this custom computer system work. They are also appreciated for their service on the floors, providing support ranging from assisting residents



with their needs, clerical support to the staff, transportation and appointment coordination, to keeping the staff informed on facility issues.



Honored Employees Continued

Central Office Celebration

The Veteran Services division and the central office personnel celebrated their staff appreciation day on May 26. John King presented the entire Veterans Estate Management Program (VEMP) team the Director's Award. The VEMP personnel serve clients that are often mentally ill and/or have drug and alcohol dependencies, and must deal with problems that stem beyond financial issues. Over a 16-month period this program has brought WDVA over \$160,000 providing more services for less money than the private sector. They have done an outstanding job as estate managers.

Jerry Towne was also honored with the Director's Award for his constant exceptional performance as a manager. Within the last two years, Towne has twice been called upon to serve as the Superintendent at Orting, while maintaining his current position as the Program Manager of the Incarcerated Veterans Program in King County. Because of his efforts the county saved over \$600,000 and reduced recidivism from over 35% to 14%. This model program earned the Governor's Quality Award in 1999. Towne's attention to process management and business results generated \$1 million per biennium in additional revenue for the Veterans Services division.

Among those receiving the Distinguished Service Award was Susan Ramsey, project lead for the staffing model. She has worked tirelessly researching staffing

options and with the staffing model team members to find the best way to develop a reasonable relief factor. Ramsey demonstrates her ability to be an efficient and effective project leader. Others given the Distinguished Service Award were Alex Deluao, Ric Price and Tom Schumacher.

Ric Price was recognized for being instrumental in conducting a statewide homeless veterans conference in November and more recently playing a key role in the development of two funding proposals, expanding our involvement in statewide homeless programs.

Alex Deluao's performance has been second to none. Over the past year he has accepted new challenges, and improved the way the agency handles public inquiries. He has also expanded his involvement in agency programs to include being part of the WDVA/ Dept. of Licensing Quality Initiative team. One of his coworkers describes Deluao as

being the epitome of the agency's mission – "Serving Those Who Served."

The PTSD program continues to expand statewide because of Tom Schumacher. Schumacher worked with the US Department of Health Administration at the Seattle VA Medical Center leveraging over \$750,000 in fee basis services. Not only have his efforts resulted in more money for PTSD counseling, but have yielded a 100% increase in the number of veterans receiving counseling and therapeutic services. Schumacher was also cited for an incident that occurred at the National Vietnam Veterans Women Conference last November. Knowing of his extraordinary skills, one of the conference coordinators asked him to come to the conference. On his own time, Schumacher provided direct services to three suffering women, and in doing so obviated a suicide. After returning to her home state of Florida, one of the veterans contacted WDVA asking

for assistance in moving her to Washington State where she could be better served.

"There are many, many outstanding employees within the agency who have a good understanding of the vision and work very hard towards achieving our goals," King stated. "We've only named a few." ★



The Performance Planning Team, Barb Logan, Brad Babayan, Connie Michener, and Dave Purtee were recently recognized for their leadership roles organizing the strategic planning concept. Each of the focus group leaders were also recognized at their respective awards ceremony.

❖ Soldiers Home Highlights

Orting thanks Volunteer Corps

By Lynn Zemke, activities director

On May 25, the Orting Soldiers Home held a banquet for the many volunteers who help to provide our veterans with special care year round.

The home's dining room staff provided an excellent prawn and chicken dinner while Jerry Towne, Acting Superintendent praised and thanked the volunteers for their many hours of commitment and devotion. This year, a special award was given to members of the Washington State Department of the American Legion Auxiliary for their many years of service to our veterans. Special awards were also presented to Enumclaw VFW Post Hospital Chairman Milton Till, and volunteer Bob Standley. Mr. Till was recognized for his work with the Black Jack program and five years of service to the home. Mr. Standley was recognized for his countless hours given each week transporting residents who live in the Nursing Care Unit, all around the grounds.

At least once a week, over 35 different volunteers visit with our veterans. Individually, they have donated a grand total of 3,900 hours in one year. Their organizations have volunteered even more during their group programs. The individual volunteers provide services that range from conducting craft groups, to bringing in their dogs for pet therapy, to pushing residents in

wheelchairs around the grounds, to just visiting our veterans.

Two volunteers devoted over 1,000 hours of time this year. Nine volunteers have been here for over 10 years, and one volunteer, Mrs. Thelma Huff, has been volunteering at the Home for 26 years. The Soldiers Home could not provide the extra care to our residents if we did not have our dedicated volunteers and the jobs they do are too many to list.

A special thank you goes to volunteer Bobbi Ballard for her continued help in setting up and presenting the Volunteer Awards Program each year. ★

MEMORIAL DAY 2000--- a day of reflection

By Bob Campbell, volunteer

Soldiers Home residents, regular attendees and first-time visitors, as well, expressed their approval and appreciation of the Memorial Day program held in Chilson Hall May 29.

Superintendent Jerry Towne commented that Memorial Day is a day of reflection. A day when we think of sons, daughters, loved ones and even those we never knew whose sacrifice enables us to experience the freedom afforded in our nation.

Senator Marilyn Rasmussen (D-Eatonville) held the attention of the audience with the reading of a poem, Passing Time, written by Annette Lester, sister of George Bodah, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War. Senator Rasmussen commented on the historical significance of the Soldiers Home and expressed her appreciation and

the appreciation we all should feel for the sacrifice of Veterans. And she asked that everyone take a moment to thank all employees and volunteers for their efforts to serve the Soldiers Home Veterans and spouses.

Representative Tom Campbell (R-Roy) expressed his hope that the veterans who were fortunate enough to return from military service would tell their story to future generations so they will be aware of the sacrifices made for the freedom they enjoy.

Representative Roger Bush (R-Graham) emphasized "freedom is not free" and we must not forget those who gave their lives for their country. "The Veterans who are living today are models for freedom and their stories should be told," said Bush.

Keynote speaker John King, Director of the WA Department of Veterans Affairs said that on this Memorial Day we again assemble in the tradition of remembering and honoring the men and women who left for war but didn't return. "They gave all they had. They gave their last full measure of life," said King. He also explained that all Americans are related by their love of country and democracy and that we must pass this relationship on to future generations.

The Memorial Day program followed a mainstream of dignity, respect and gratitude directed toward all military personnel who died in service to their country. The music, participation of the Air Force Honor Guard, involvement of Soldiers Home residents in the Pledge of Allegiance, Proclamation



and Roll Call, and all aspects of the program was a moving experience for the audience. ★



Fourth of July celebration planned

By Lynn Zemke, activities director

The community of Orting will once again turn out to support the Washington Soldiers Home for their annual Fourth of July celebration.

The public is invited to join in the festivities that are scheduled to begin at 12:30 pm and will include baseball games, wagon and pony rides, craft sales, face painting, western bands, kids and adult game contests, karaoke, banjo playing and various singing groups. In addition, there will be antique and vintage cars on display. Also featured are two pet shows "Meet-n-Greet Pigs" and "Chris Biro's Exotic Birds."

What would a July 4th celebration be without food? Plenty of food vendors selling selections that range from complete chicken dinners to snack items like funnel cakes, hot dogs, and snow cones will be selling throughout the day.

Make sure you pace yourself, because the band of the day, "A Touch of Class," will start at 8 pm, providing a big-band sound that will play in the gazebo until the fireworks start at 10 pm.

If you would like to be a part of this wonderful day as a volunteer or would just like more information on attending, contact Lynn Zemke at (360) 893-4511. ★

❖ Veterans Home Highlights

WVH hosts Health Fair

Over 100 people attended the Health and Wellness Fair planned and organized by the home's Wellness committee. Staff, residents and community individuals gathered information useful in becoming more healthy or maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Participants from the American Diabetes Association, Harrison Hospital, Givens Community Center and TOPS of Washington were among the organizations with booths in the auditorium.

The Port Orchard Line Dancers entertained fair goers and demonstrated how dancing can be a fun and effective way to exercise. ★

King addresses Memorial Day audience

By April Harris, secretary to the superintendent

The Washington Veterans Home annual Memorial Day program was attended by nearly 200 people. The South Kitsap High School ROTC provided the color guard and assisted in pushing wheelchair-bound residents from the nursing buildings to the ceremony. VFW Post 2669 provided the wreath and the rifle squad. Ron Smith from the same



A couple of staffers take advantage of the mini massage given by a local masseur at the Health and Wellness Fair held on May 17.

post played TAPS. Music was provided by the Clam Island Band.

Guest speaker, John King, Director of WDVA, reminded everyone we owe our freedom to those who served.

"We do not gather here to remember the carnage of war. That is not what today is all about," King said. "We are gathered to honor the men and women who went to protect the interests and freedom of all Americans."

Raynold "Bogo" Peterson presented King with a token of remembrance for his participation in the program.

Master of Ceremonies, Jim Ducker, introduced resident Frances Blackerby, who read the Governor's Proclamation, and resident Dale Colbert, who read the honor roll of the Veterans Home residents who passed away over the last year. A memorial to those residents was placed in the foyer of the auditorium that included pictures of each resident, and a vase, in which guests placed carnations to honor those who passed on. ★

Identifying the stars...

❖ WDMA

New Arrivals

Orting...

Kathy Willis, FSA 1
Kum Maun, Custodian
Ken Leary, RN 3
Angela Erickson, FSA 1
Marsha Keeno, NA1-C
Patty Tynon, NA1-C

Retsil...

Deryl Smith, LW 1
Marie Ciliberto, Nurse
Practitioner
David Hutchason, Nurse
Practitioner

Brenda Maurer, Office Asst
Quindola Crowley, Social
Work Mgr
Edwin Hassan, LW 1

Central Office...

Ken Urquhart, Information
Technology Application
Specialist 5
Darcy Morris, temp. part-
time ADL Local Funds
Implementation Project
Coordinator

Promotions

Orting...

Kris Elliott, NA2-C, Temp

Secretary Senior
Tonja Carlson, Office Asst
part time to full time

Retsil...

Lauralyn Grady, Promotion
to NA2-C
Brenda Callahan-
McCormick, Trial Service
appt to PSW 3

Central Office...

Oscar Green, NA2-C Retsil
to Safety Officer
Mac Harris, VBS 1 Orting to
VEMP/CAT Central Office

Separations

Orting...

William Medinger, Cook 1
Diana Smalls, FSA 1

Retsil...

Sandra Ferido, L W 1
Lola Bertalotto, Temp RN 3
Evangeline Hill, NA1-C
Richard Prouse, Srl, NA1-C
Arlene Nesseth, Custodian
(Retired)
Virgina Dennison, LPN 3
Connie Long, LW1

Denton to the rescue

Tom Adams gives Carol Denton a bouquet of roses and a big hug in appreciation of her assisting in saving his life.

On May 22, Adams was in Bremerton dropping off some residents at their doctor appointments when he started feeling bad so he pulled over to get out of the vehicle and get some fresh air. Carol Denton, Act. Asst. was on her way in to work when she saw Adams and stopped to see if everything was okay. She said he looked sick so she called 911. Adams was taken to Harrison ER



Tom Adams, Auto Driver shows his appreciation to Carol Denton after she called 911 while Adams was suffering a heart attack on the side of the road.

where he did suffer a heart attack. He was immediately rushed to surgery and a shunt was inserted. All this happened within a few hours.

At a short ceremony in her work unit, Denton was given a Certificate of Merit for her humanitarian efforts. Adams said he knew Carol from working with her in the food service dept., and he's still afraid of her so he didn't argue when she asked for the phone.

Adams will undergo some follow-up testing before returning to work. ★



Retsil Fun Fest - 4th of July Schedule

8 to 10 am Fathoms O Fun Pancake Breakfast
10 to 4 Food and Game Booths Open
10 to 3 Bingo Games - ATB
10 Clam Island Band - Aud.
11 Port Orchard Line Dancers - Aud.
11:45 Children's Parade - outside
12 Children's Music by Tammy - Aud
12:30 Children's Field Games - outside

1 pm Samaria Dancers - Aud
2 Dick Coolan's Musical Trio - Aud.
3 Pie Eating Contest - outside

Volunteers are needed to assist residents in getting around campus to enjoy all the events. Call Catherine Clark at (360) 895-4376 for more details. This celebration is open to the public.

How to request military medals and awards

Requests for the issuance or replacement of military service medals, decorations, and awards should be directed to the specific branch of the military in which the veteran served. However, for Air Force (including Army Air Corps) and Army personnel, the National Personnel Records Center will verify the awards to which a veteran is entitled and forward the request with the verification to the appropriate service department for issuance of the medals.

The Standard Form (SF 180) Request Pertaining to Military Records, is recommended for requesting medals and awards. Provide as much information as possible and send the form to the appropriate address in the table below:

NOTE: Recently, the Department of the Army and the National Archives and Records Administration entered into an agreement which gives the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) authority to verify entitlement to replacement awards and decorations for **discharged, retired or deceased** Army veterans. This was previously the responsibility of the Army Reserve Personnel Command (AR-PERSCOM). Army medals requests submitted within the last two years are currently in the process of being transferred from AR-PERSCOM to NPRC. The transfer of this work will take a number of months to complete.

Once the transfer has been completed, requests pertaining to these specific Army medals will be answered as quickly as possible.

AR-PERSCOM estimates a backlog of 98,000 routine requests for Army medals, going back two years; and at least 4,300 Congressional requests for Army awards and decorations which may also be up to two years old. However, multiple requests for the same awards will further complicate the process. Once the transfer is complete, responding to both the backlog of requests and all new inquiries will begin in an expeditious manner. If you are now requesting medals, or you previously wrote to NPRC or AR-PERSCOM requesting medals,

NPRC asks that you do not write again.

The following is suggested as an example of an acceptable authorization:

"I authorize the National Personnel Records Center, or other custodian of my military service record, to release to (your name or that of your company/organization) the following information and/or copies of documents from my military service record."

Complete the authorization by specifying the information and/or document(s) requested. Be sure to **sign** and **date** the authorization. Authorizations are honored for one year from the date of signature. ★

Service Branch	Where to write for medals	Where medals are mailed from	Where to write in case of a problem or an appeal
Army	National Personnel Records Center Medals Section (NRPMA-M) 9700 Page Avenue St. Louis, MO 63132-5100 See NOTE below	U.S. Army Soldier & Biological Chemical Command, INMC Soldier Systems Directorate 700 Robbins Avenue P.O. Box 57997 Philadelphia, PA 19111-7997	Commander PERSCOM Attn: TAPC-PD0-PA 100 Small Street Alexandria, VA 22303-0471 See NOTE below
Air Force (including Army Air Corps & Army Air Force)	National Personnel Records Center Air Force Reference Branch (NRPMB) 9700 Page Avenue St. Louis, MO 63132-5100	Headquarters Air Force Personnel Ctr A7PC/DPPR 330-C Street West, Suite 12 Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4714	Headquarters Air Force Personnel Ctr A7PC/DPPR 330-C Street West, Suite 12 Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4714
Navy	Bureau of Naval Personnel Liaison Office Room 3409 9700 Page Avenue St. Louis, MO 63132-5100	Bureau of Naval Personnel Liaison Office Room 3409 9700 Page Avenue St. Louis, MO 63132-5100	Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV 09B53) Awards & Special Projects Washington, DC 20350-2000
Marine Corps	Bureau of Naval Personnel Liaison Office Room 3409 9700 Page Avenue St. Louis, MO 63132-5100	Bureau of Naval Personnel Liaison Office Room 3409 9700 Page Avenue St. Louis, MO 63132-5100	Commandant Headquarters United States Marine Corps Awards Branch (M08M) Washington, DC 20380-0001
Coast Guard	Bureau of Naval Personnel Liaison Office Room 3409 9700 Page Avenue St. Louis, MO 63132-5100	Bureau of Naval Personnel Liaison Office Room 3409 9700 Page Avenue St. Louis, MO 63132-5100	Commandant U.S. Coast Guard Medals and Awards Branch (PMF-4) Washington, DC 20590-0001

A new association dedicated to Meeting the Needs of Today's Veterans

Calvin (Kelly) Ferber, a Korean War veteran, announced at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on May 10, the formation of the Veterans Resource Network Association (VRNA), a new national organization dedicated to meeting the changing needs of today's veterans.

Ferber, president of the board of directors of VRNA, said the purpose of the organization is to educate and counsel veterans about their rights to benefits from the Veterans Administration, deliver valued benefits and services from the private sector, enhance the lifestyle of members through healthcare and financial services, create networking possibilities among veterans and inform Americans about the role veterans have played in keeping the country independent and safe.

Membership in VRNA is offered to anyone who served at least six months in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard or the National Guard and military reserves. The goal is to build an organization that, through its group buying power, will empower veterans to receive better services, prices, discounts and information from the private sector. They will also have experts to assist veterans in obtaining information about the various VA benefit programs available, provide advice about how to pursue a claim and explain what to do if a claim is

denied.

For information on membership call toll-free 1-877-848-VRNA (8762) or look up their Web site, www.vrna.org, it is loaded with information and services. ★

Source: Veterans Resource Network Association

VA Secretary backs GI Bill increase

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Togo D. West Jr. praised an administration proposal for a 25 percent increase in Montgomery GI Bill educational assistance for veterans and active-duty military personnel. If approved by Congress, it would be the largest single benefits hike in the program's 16-year history.

This proposal would nearly double Montgomery GI Bill benefits from their level in 1993 when President Clinton took office. The Clinton-Gore proposal would permit veterans to use their Montgomery GI Bill benefits for certain licensing and certification. The plan also provides the same percentage increase in education benefits for survivors and dependents.

The administration plan, unveiled May 10 by Vice President Gore, would increase payments under the Montgomery GI Bill educational assistance program from \$536 to \$670 monthly. The higher rates would take effect October 1.

The increase would narrow the gap that has developed between Montgomery GI Bill benefits and

the cost of higher education. In 1985, the \$300 monthly benefit covered 70 percent of the average college tuition. The current rate of \$536 only pays 58 percent of the average tuition.

Under the Montgomery GI Bill, active-duty participants have a \$100 monthly deduction from their paychecks for their first 12 months in uniform. ★

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Benefits Book on sale now

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) has published the 2000 edition of "Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents."

This booklet incorporates 1999 law changes into the text. The handbook provides information on USDVA medical care, education benefits, disability compensation, pension and burial assistance. It also contains the addresses of all USDVA benefits offices, medical centers, national cemeteries and counseling centers. The VA phone number is 1-800-827-1000. (This will connect you with the regional office nearest your location.)

The Government Printing Office sells the booklet for \$5. The text is also on the internet at www.va.gov/benefits/htm.

Order GPO stock number 051-000-00220-2 from Superintendent of Documents, PO Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954 or call 202-512-1800. ★

Source: Veteran's Voice Vol. 13 NO. 9

**Here's
the
latest**



Master Plan/Predesign Update:

Planning team analyzes feedback

By **Connie Michener**, executive performance manager

In 1998, the Legislature appropriated funds to WDVA to conduct a feasibility study focused on veteran demographics and needs assessment; analyses of the agency roles and context; analyses of the state homes roles; and the initial program and facility directions. As a result of the study, the legislature approved additional funding in 1999 to develop a master plan, a study on the demands for nursing, assisted living, domiciliary and community-based rehabilitation care for veterans. In the 2000 legislative session, the legislature approved an appropriation for WDVA to conduct a predesign study for replacement of aging skilled nursing facilities.

Over the last several weeks the Core Planning Team, which consists of NBBJ consultants and WDVA managers, has been spending their time meeting with staff, residents, union representatives, the Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee, and other veteran organizations to brief them on the process, solicit their input, and listen to ideas. The Core Team has also been conducting site visits at state veterans homes in several other states, as well as site visits to local private nursing facilities to gather data on programs, operations, and facilities. Once the data is analyzed with the information gathered from the feedback sessions mentioned above, the Core Team will be scheduling additional meetings to go over the preliminary options for additional feedback. ★

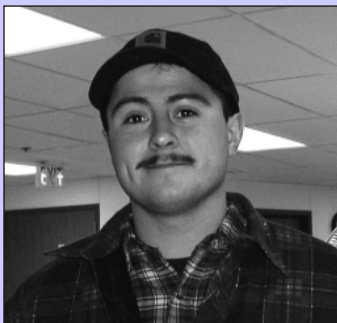


NBBJ consultants visited both veterans homes gathering data from residents and staff, regarding what their ideal home and work site would look and feel like.

Schedule of Events

- June 30 "Hire a Vet" Job Fair 9-3 AMVETS Post 1
S. Tyler Tacoma (253) 472-1966
- July 4th Orting Celebration 10am-11pm Open to Public
Retsil Fun Fest 8am-3pm Open to Public
- July 21 American Legion Convention
Cavanaugh's Gateway Yakima
POC: Dale Davis (360) 491-4373
- July 29 Korean War Wreath Laying Ceremony 11 am
Korean War Memorial - Capitol Campus
- Veterans Benefits Fair/Puget Sound Health Screening**
POC: Lynda Reese (360) 478-4565
- July 15 Chehalis WA
- Aug 8 Ferndale, WA
- Aug 26 Oak Harbor, WA
- The Moving Wall** (Vietnam national memorial replica)
- July 30-Aug 5 Silverdale, WA - Central Kitsap Jr. High
William Idsinga (360) 779-4607
- Aug 8-14 Bellingham, WA - Harborview Lions Club
Francine Kincaid (360) 676-6717
- Aug 17-23 Nespelem, WA - Am. Legion #114
C. George (800) 851-2296

Veteran Voices



Veteran Voices is printed for people like trades helper Mike Armendariz, who's worked at the Veterans Home for five years.

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